

## Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRASILIA 8491

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, BR

SUBJECT: BRAZILIAN OPPOSITION PARTY CONGRESS

REF: BRASILIA 7803

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE MDB PARTY CONVENTION, ATTENDED BY OVER 400 DELEGATES, ENDED ON AN OPTIMISTIC NOTE AFTER SEVERAL WEEKS OF INTERNAL CRISIS. A THREATENED SPLIT BY THE RADICAL "AUTENTICO" GROUP OVER THE COMPOSITION OF THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTORATE WAS AT LEAST TEMPORARILY RESOLVED AND THE PARTY WAS ABLE TO RETURN TO ITS INTERNAL ORGANIZATION AND TACTICS FOR THE ELECTORAL FUTURE OF THE MDB. WHILE BOTH STRENGTH AND FRUSTRATIONS OF MDB'S LEFT WING HAVE GROWN, UNLIKELY RADICALS WILL RISK CURRENT ADVANTAGES OF LEVERAGE AND COVER WITHIN PARTY OR SHARE OF PROSPECTIVE MDB ELECTION GAINS BY PROVOKING SPLIT AT THIS TIME. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SEPTEMBER 20-21 CONVENTION OF THE MDB WAS PRECEDED BY AN INTERCINE STRUGGLE WEEKS' DURATION THAT THREATENED TO FORCE ITS CANCELLATION. THE INTERNAL FIGHT CENTERED AROUND HOW MANY MEMBERS OF THE "AUTENTICO" WING, THE MORE RADICAL ELEMENT OF THE PARTY, WOULD BE ACCORDED POSITIONS ON THE 71-MAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTORATE. THE "AUTENTICO" (THEIR RANKS EXPANDED BY THE FAVORABLE

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RESULTS OF THE NOVEMBER 1974 ELECTIONS) IN THIS LEGISLATIVE

SESSION HAVE SO FAR BEEN FAIRLY QUIET AND THE LEADERSHIP OF THE FACTION, HAD UNTIL RECENTLY MAINTAINED PEACE WITH THE MORE TRADITION-MINDED TOP LEADERS OF THE PARTY, ULYSSES GUIMARAES AND THALES RAMALHO. ALTHOUGH THE "AUTHENTICOS" CLAIMED TO HAVE BEEN PROMISED 31 PLACES ON THE DIRECTORATE AND 5 PLACES ON THE EXECUTIVE BOARD, INCLUDING A SECOND VICE-PRESIDENCY AND TREASURER, THE PARTY LEADERS, UNDER PRESSURE FROM THE MORE MODERATE MEMBERS OF THE PARTY, REDUCED THE INITIAL OFFER TO 26 SEATS ON THE DIRECTORATE AND AN UNSPECIFIED SMALLER NUMBER ON THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

2. AFTER PROTESTS AND WARNINGS BY THE "AUTHENTICOS" THAT THEY WOULD RUN THEIR OWN SLATE FOR DIRECTORATE AND EXECUTIVE BOARD POSITIONS, PARTY LEADERS REVIVED THEIR ORIGINAL OFFER. BUT SOON AFTER THIS ACCORD WAS REACHED, THE "AUTHENTICOS" ANNOUNCED THAT THEIR CHOICE FOR THE PROMISED SECOND VICE-PRESIDENCY WAS EX-DEPUTY FRANCISCO

PINTO, CASSATED AND JAILED IN 1974 FOR OFFENDING PRESIDENT PINOCHET OF CHILE (SEE BRASILIA 7805). PINTO'S NAME WAS PROMPTLY VETOED BY THE TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP AND THE "AUTHENTICOS" THREATENED A BOYCOTT OF THE SINGLE SLATE IN SUPPORT OF THE REJECTED PINTO. AT THIS POINT, PINTO SURPRISED HIS "AUTENTICO" COLLEAGUES, PREPARING TO FIGHT OVER HIS EXCLUSION, BY RENOUNCING HIS CANDIDACY IN FAVOR OF PARTY SOLIDARITY AND A SINGLE SLATE. CONCURRENTLY, A RIGHTIST GROUP, NICKNAMED THE "DISCONTENTS", WERE SEEKING TO TORPEDO THE SINGLE SLATE AGREED TO BY THE "AUTHENTICOS" AND THE REGULAR LEADERSHIP. FINALLY, WITH THE CONCESSION OF 26 PLACES ON THE DIRECTORATE TO THE "AUTHENTICOS" AND PINTO'S WITHDRAWAL, IDEOLOGICAL BICKERING ENDED BEFORE THE CONVENTION. SENATOR ORESTES QUERCIA (SAO PAULO) WAS ADDED AS A MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMISSION IN WHAT WAS DESCRIBED AS A MOVE TO STRENGTHEN THE GROUP WITH THE INCLUSION OF A TOP VOTE-GETTING SENATOR.

3. DURING THE CONVENTION, ONE GROUP OF "RENOVADORES", THE GENERIC NAME USED FOR "AUTHENTICOS" AND "NEO-AUTHENTICOS", LEAD BY DEPUTY FREITAS NOBRE, DISSATISFIED WITH THE METHODS BY WHICH THE SINGLE SLATE FOR THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE WAS CHOSEN, ATTEMPTED TO OFFER AN ALTERNATE SLATE IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO THE VOTE. AFTER A SHORT DISCUSSION, THE PROPOSED "RENOVADOR" CANDIDATES WERE WITH-  
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DRAWN ON THE PRETEXT THAT THE MAN NEEDED TO COMPLETE THEIR SLATE WAS ABSENT.

4. THE RESULTS OF THE WORK OF THE CONVENTION WERE EMBODIED IN NEW STATUTES FOR THE ORGANIZATION AND GOVERNANCE OF THE PARTY, ONE OF THE STATUTES CALLED FOR THE CREATION OF AN INSTITUTE OF ECONOMIC, POLITICAL, AND SOCIAL STUDIES FOR THE STUDY OF CURRENT BRAZILIAN PROBLEMS. INCUMBENT PARTY PRESIDENT ULYSSES GUIMARAES

AND SECRETARY-GENERAL THALES RAMALHO WERE RE-ELECTED.

5. GUIMARAES' SPEECH TO DELEGATES WAS OPTIMISTIC THAT MUNICIPAL ELECTORAL CAMPAIGNS OF 1976 WOULD SEE MDB BEGIN ITS RISE TO NATIONAL POWER WITH CONQUEST OF LOCAL LEVEL OFFICES AS SPRINGBOARD FOR MDB VICTORY IN THE 1978 GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS. THE MDB WAS CHARACTERIZED BY GUIMARAES AS THE "FRONT" OF ALL THOSE WHO ARE WORKING FOR THE RETURN OF DEMOCRACY TO BRAZIL. THE PRE-CONVENTION DISCORD AND DIVERGENCIES WERE PROOF OF THE FREE AND OPEN STRUCTURE OF THE PARTY, NOTED THE PRESIDENT. GUIMARAES LAUDED THE STRENGTH OF DECISIONS HEWN FROM INDEPENDENT CONSENSUS NOT "PRE-FABRICATED AND IMPOSED". THE PARTY, HE EXERTED, WAS RESOLVED TO RETURN DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT TO BRAZIL WHATEVER THE OBSTACLES. GUIMARAES BOLDLY STATED THE PARTY WOULD NOT BE INTIMIDATED BY ELECTORAL ALCHEMY, THREATS, PERSECUTION OR "KIDNAPPINGS" (A REFERENCE TO THE RECENT INCOMMUNICADO DETENTIONS OF SEVERAL RANKING LOCAL-LEVEL MDB MEMBERS IN PARANA STATE FOR SUBVERSION). THE MDB LEADER EMPHASIZED THAT WITHOUT SURE, SWIFT, CHEAP, AND EQUAL JUSTICE FOR ALL THERE IS NO "STATE OF LAW". THE MUCH CONJECTURED ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW PARTIES AND ELECTORAL REFORM WERE CHARACTERIZED AS "PANACEAS OF EXORCISM" WHOSE GOAL WAS TO ANESTHETIZE AND CONFUSE POLITICAL OPINION.

6. COMMENT: EMBOLDENED BY THE RESULTS OF THE 1974 ELECTIONS AND CONTINUED SIGNS OF SLIPPAGE OF ARENA POPULARITY, THE MDB GAVE CLEAR WARNING THAT IT INTENDS TO GO ALL OUT IN THE 1976 LOCAL ELECTIONS. THE IDEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES THAT CAUSED THE PRE-CONVENTION THRASHING ABOUT WERE PAPERED OVER FOR A DISPLAY OF PARTY HARMONY, BUT WERE FAR FROM BANISHED. THE 26 PLACED YIELDED TO THE "AUTHENTICOS" ON THE DIRECTORATE, WHICH HAS MET ONLY TWICE IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS, HAS PROBABLY NOT SATISFIED THE GROUPS' DESIRE FOR A GREATER VOICE AND AN ALL OUT POWER STRUGGLE WOULD SPLINTER AND EFFECTIVELY DESTROY THE CONFIDENTIAL

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UNEASY COHESION OF WHAT ONEMDB DEPUTY CALLS THE "IDEOLOGICAL FEDERATION" OF THE OPPOSITION PARTY. BUT WHILE THE PARTY'S LEFT MAY STEP UP ITS DEMANDS, THERE ARE SIGNS IT WOULD FAVOR A FULL SPLIT EVEN LESS THAN THE PARTY'S MODERATES AND CONSERVATIVES. AWARE OF ITS MINORITY STATUS WITHIN THE MDB, THE LEFT RECOGNIZES THE DISPROPORTIONATE VOICE IT HAS WITHIN THE PARTY AND IN NATIONAL AFFAIRS AND THE DANGEROUSLY EXPOSED POSITION IT WOULD HAVE AS A SEPARATE POLITICAL ENTITY. AT THE SAME TIME, THE YOUNGER RADICALS FEEL IMPELLED TO VENT THEIR SENSE OF FRUSTRATION OVER THEIR OWN AND THE MDB'S INABILITY TO CONVERT THE 1974 ELECTORAL SUCCESSES INTO EFFECTIVE POLITICAL ACTION, PARTICULARLY WITH THE DEMISE OF "DISTENSAO". THE RECENT ARRESTS IN PARANA STATE OF MDB MEMBERS AS SUSPECTED SUBVERSIVES AND THE CONTINUED WARNINGS BY GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN OF COMMUNIST

INFILTRATION OF AND AID TO THE MDB HAVE HEIGHTENED RESENTMENT AND COMBATIVENESS AMONG THE MDB RADICALS WHILE ILLUSTRATING THE DANGERS OF OVEREXPOSURE. THE PARANA ARRESTS INDICATED, HOWEVER, THAT GOVERNMENT HARASSMENT OF THE MDB ON "SECURITY GROUNDS", RATHER THAN DRIVING

THE WEDGE DEEPER BETWEEN THE CONFLICTING FACTIONS, CAN BECOME A RALLYING POINT, AS GUIMARAES' SPEECH SUGGESTS. THE FADING OF PRESIDENT GEISEL'S POLICY OF POLITICAL DECOMPRESSION AND SIGNS OF CONTINUING ECONOMIC SLUMP ARE FACTORS THAT MAY WELL YIELD GREATER PROTEST VOTE FOR THE OPPOSITION IN 1976--AND THE MDB RADICALS KNOW IT. RATHER THAN RISK SHARING IN THE EXPECTED ELECTORAL VICTORIES OF 1976 AND 1978 BY BREAKING OFF INTO A POLITICALLY IRRELEVANT FRAGMENT, THE MDB LEFT SEEMS MORE INCLINED TO REIN IN ITS IMPATIENCE AND CONTINUE ITS UNEASY COHABITATION WITH THE RIGHT AND CENTER OF THE PARTY.  
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